



# ***CITY NEWS***

Community Relations Office  
455 N. Main Wichita, KS 67202  
(316) 268-4351 FAX (316) 268-4519  
[www.wichita.gov](http://www.wichita.gov)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Charles Anderson, Environmental Quality Specialist, 268-8351

## **Nine-legged Frog Found in East Wichita**

### **Environmental Condition Evaluated**

Earlier this week, a family living on the east side of Wichita found a nine-legged frog in a child's swimming pool. The City of Wichita Environmental Services Department was contacted to determine if there was an environmental problem that caused the frog to have multiple legs.

Recent studies have shown that a parasitic trematode can cause extra legs to grow on frogs. Scientists believe that these deformities have become more common due to larger snail populations and smaller frog populations. Increasing amounts of fertilizers are ending up in stormwater, causing significant increases in algal growth in ponds and water bodies, which provides more habitat for snails, the trematode's initial host. And, in conjunction with the general decline in amphibian species, fewer intermediate hosts (frogs) are available for the parasite and thus a greater percentage of frogs are infected with the trematode parasite. The life cycle of the trematode parasite begins in the snail, and from there the parasite migrates to a tadpole and creates a cyst. These cysts are what scientists believe cause the extra limbs in frogs to grow. With the growth of extra limbs, the tadpole or frog is encumbered and is an easier target for predators, especially herons and egrets. Once a bird eats an infected frog, the parasite resumes its lifecycle and reproduces in the bird's gut. Through the bird's feces, the eggs of the parasite are shed and when the egg laden feces comes into contact with snail populated waters, the trematode's lifecycle can begin again.



Pictures courtesy of City of Wichita, Environmental Services Department

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It is not believed at this time that this abnormal frog is anymore than a carrier of the trematode parasite. Typically, poor environmental conditions will not allow a frog to survive. And since this frog is surviving, the local ecosystem is probably in reasonably good shape. However, Environmental Services would like to ask all property owners and businesses to use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, only in amounts recommended by product labels. These chemicals can easily pollute storm waters and impact the environment. This problem not only may contribute to abnormalities in frogs, but birds, fish and other wildlife can suffer ill effects. People are directly affected if they drink contaminated water or eat contaminated wildlife or fish. It is always better to be on the conservative side of chemical use. We all need to do our part to protect the environment and people's health.

Two Internet links that describe this phenomenon can be found here:

<http://amos.indiana.edu/library/scripts/froglegs.html>

<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?articleID=000D5DCC-CA4A-1E1C-8B3B809EC588EEDF&pageNumber=1&catID=2>

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